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An electronics engineer who believes the CIA blocked his security clearance because he is a homosexual has asked a federal appellate court to force the government to state its policy for refusing clearance.

The government has not revealed which agency denied the clearance, but Richard Gayer said Thursday it was the CIA, which routinely refuses to hire or approve security clearances for homosexuals.

Gayer, who argued his own case before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, told the three-judge panel, "This is a simple case of procedure, due process, not gay rights. If a person is denied a security clearance, then they should be told why."

An employee of GTE Government Systems, a Mountain View, Calif., electronics company, Gayer said the Department of Defense gave him a security clearance in 1980. But in 1982, when he needed a second clearance for work on a classified GTE project, his application was denied.

He filed a class action suit in U.S. District Court in 1984 asking that the government be required to state its policy for refusing industrial security clearance applications.

The court dismissed the suit after government officials showed secret documents to the judge and argued that explaining the circumstances behind the refusal would disclose classified government information.

Federal officials employed a similar tactic Thursday, delivering sealed classified documents to the court.

U.S. Attorney Freddi Lipstein refused to confirm whether the CIA was the contracting agency on the project for which Gayer was denied clearance.

"We cannot defend this case without referring to the classified information," Lipstein said. "The relationship of the sponsor agency to that program cannot be revealed."

The judges indicated they would review the documents privately and determine whether to hear arguments or dismiss the case.